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THE SCHOOL OF RITSUO

OGAWA RITSUO, a Samurai of Kuwana, in the province of Ise, renounced the career of arms to give himself up to art. He was born in 1662, and died at Yedo (now called Tokio) in 1746. He was a painter, sculptor, faïencier and lacquerer, not to mention that he had been renowned as a tactician and swordsman.

The lacquers of Ritsuo are from his own designs, while most of the artists in lacquer, except Korin, have more or less worked from designs painted by pictorial artists of some fame. The lacquers of Ritsuo frequently have incrustated decorations in relief on them, in faïence, ivory, pearl, tortoise shell, metal and gilded wood.

Like a true artist, he scorned precious metals, and produced the most striking decoration with materials which had no intrinsic value, and owed everything to their artistic merit. An okimono in the form of a falcon, in enamelled faïence and lacquered with low-toned gold over the enamelling, now in this city, is a striking example of his art. The gold of Ritsuo, like the gold of Korin, would deserve a special study of itself, so full is it of novel and rare effects, and so capable of running through a whole gamut of sober but yet brilliant tones of reds, yellow, blue and green. This superb piece shows his mastery of delicate treatment of exquisitely graduated colors in faïence, enamel and lacquers.

Among those who became followers of his style must be mentioned especially Hauzan, Zeshin and Kenya for their lacs, and Hoitsu for his paintings.

T. TAKAYANAGI.

BABBLE OF THE BOULEVARD

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

THERE is nothing quite so attractive to the French, no story, novel or tale so popular, as that which treats of the war of 1870. Nearly every Frenchman, at some period of his life, has been a soldier; or, if he has not already served out the three years prescribed by the law, he sooner or later will be obliged to do so. The female, as well as the male sex are equally interested in the affairs of the army, and especially in the events incident to the struggle that terminated so unhappily in the fatal valley of Sedan. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Emile Zola has chosen for the subject of his last installment of the history of the Rougon-Macquart's the lurid scenes of the Franco-Prussian campaign. In short, the master of realism, who has already depicted for us the intrigues of the demi-monde, the degradation of provincial life, and the wretched existence of the Paris artisan, has now selected as his theme the horrors of war.

The author, who for almost twenty years has been formulating the scenes which he has at last woven together into a volume of four hundred pages, has done his work well. Zola is a worker. There is no doubt about that. If he wishes to describe the every-day life of the *cabarets* of the Batignolles, he goes there. He knows the garrets of Montmartre and the filthy cellars of La Villette. To accurately picture the surrender of the French—to which six chapters of his book are devoted—he has spent weeks on the plain of Sedan. The result is a magnificent descriptive account of the engagement. No other living Frenchman can make us so shudder at the brutal inhumanity of his characters as Zola. No other living author, not even John Ruskin, can describe with such a magical choice of adjectives the glorious suburban scenery, the flowers and grasses, the undulating fields of yellow corn or the vine-clad hills, as he who has twice been refused admission to the Academy.

Corporal Jean Macquart is the hero of Monsieur Zola's latest novel; and through his half-stupid bourgeois intellect we are enabled to observe the progress of the great struggle from its very midst, with the cannon's smoke strong in our nostrils and the shell whizzing by our ears. Like his comrades in arms, Jean is sanguine of the ultimate result of the war. It seems absurd that anyone should think of attacking France. With the others, he wants to push on to Berlin. The Emperor proposes to dispatch 400,000 men across the Rhine and surprise the Prussians before they are prepared for serious engagement. Austria and Italy could not restrain themselves from the support of Louis Napoleon directly the first few decisive victories were proclaimed. But after all this comes the reaction, the decimation and defeat of a disorganized, discouraged and dismembered army. Disaster is followed by retreat, famine and death, until the once idolized commander-in-chief is looked upon with contempt by the regiments of the line. "Foutre!" ejaculates Macquart as the Emperor rides past escorted by his *etat major*, "he must have a tough stone in his gut, that one." Whether or not the author of "L'Assommoir" will more firmly popularize himself by the publication of "La Débâcle" I scarcely dare to predict. As a picture of war it is superb. As a

chronicle of the irreparable loss and dishonor sustained by a great nation it will no doubt give rise to the bitterest of criticism.

That facts are stranger than Munchausenism is proven by a lawsuit at this moment being prosecuted in a Court of Justice not far from Paris. Late last autumn two sportsmen were hunting with their dog and guns in the forest skirting a neighboring village, when, but a few steps in advance of them, a rabbit emerged from his burrow with a copper coin in his mouth. The fowling pieces were aimed and fired simultaneously, both charges taking effect in the hide of the precocious quadruped. The object, which the animal still held clenched between his teeth, was extracted. It proved a rare specimen of sixteenth century money, bearing the half-effaced effigy of a bygone monarch and struck in 1585. As may be presumed, the astonished nimrods at once dispatched their dogs into an exploration of the burrow, the operation soon resulting in the discovery of more than one hundred silver and copper coins of great scarcity. Of course the occurrence was immediately noised abroad. But the delighted numismatics were made to regret the publicity given the affair by the proprietor of the property on which the rarities were found putting in a claim for the same. The decision of the court is now awaited with anxiety.

As the preceding paragraph is given on the authority of the *Figaro*, I cannot vouch for its unqualified veracity. One day an acquaintance of the editor of that journal observed to him: "Your paper is full of lies!" "Well, what of it?" returned Magnard; "the lies amuse you, don't they?"

To those who have had experience, satisfactory or otherwise, with American auctioneers, or who have either suffered or gained by their system of sale and commission, an idea of the manner in which public sales are conducted in Paris may prove interesting. There is in the French capital but one place, practically speaking, where antiquities, pictures, coins, books, autographs, furniture, etc., are disposed of under the hammer. It is at the Hôtel Drouot. The great mart, with its spacious galleries, while being under control of the Government, belongs in reality to the *Société des Commissaires Priseurs*, otherwise the Society of Auctioneers. The society is a corporation very much on the same order as the Chicago Board of Trade or the London Stock Exchange. By popular vote anyone is eligible to membership, though the initiation fee is placed at an exceptionally high figure. It follows, then, that each and every salesman connected with the establishment is a man of responsibility and good standing. The commissions are moderate, and, at the close of a sale, are divided equally between the auctioneer and the sinking fund of the association. There is no city in the world where so many auctions take place as in Paris. There are at least six or eight a day at the Hôtel Drouot alone. Too many, in fact, for any ordinary human being to keep the run of, much less attend. Their merit lies in the fairness of their conduction, and if you pay too dearly for a worthless article it is because your own personal discernment is lacking.

Monsieur Victorien Sardou, whose play "Thermidor" was suppressed by the Censure after three performances at the Théâtre Français, has done something that is almost without precedent in the annals of literature. From his stirring melodrama, which, by the way, Coquelin is now presenting in Austria, the dramatist has constructed a romance. What we are prohibited from witnessing on the stage we may buy at the book-stalls. It is but another illustration of the inconsistency of things in France. "*Le Roi est mort; vive le Roi!*" The book, which bears the same title as the play, and which is the second romance from the pen of the distinguished Academician, will make its appearance within a few months. Madeleine Lemaire illustrates the text.

For thirty years M. Sardou's particular passion has been the study of that most interesting portion of French history, the Revolution, and the collection of every object connected in any way therewith. Articles of costume, arms, curiosities, caricatures, newspapers dating from the last decade of the eighteenth century, are all welcome to Sardou provided they be authentic. The intimate knowledge thus acquired enables him, as it were, to transport himself back to the times of ninety-four, and has inspired him with an intense love of accuracy in all matters connected with his favorite study. Thus the costumes worn in "Thermidor" at the Français were historically correct, even to a button. The very cockades on the hats were the exact counterpart of those worn by the La Bussièrès and Martials of the period, and the crockery used in the breakfast scene was not a reproduction, but actually dated from the Reign of Terror. With his rich store of information regarding the subject in hand, M. Sardou cannot fail to produce a work not only of the highest romantic interest, but of direct historical value.

Apropos: "Thermidor" is not the only one of Monsieur Sardou's plays suppressed by the Censure. In March, 1873, the Government authorities promptly forbid the representation of a comedy, in four